

CRITICAL THINKING QURANIC STUDIES TEXTBOOK YEAR 1

LALEH BAKHTIAR

CRITICAL THINKING
AND THE
CHRONOLOGICAL QURAN
IN THE
LIFE OF PROPHET MUHAMMAD

THE YEAR
1
OF THE REVELATION
(13 BH/610 CE)

REVISED EDITION

INTRODUCTION BY
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LESSON 22. CRITICAL THINKING INTELLECTUAL STANDARD CONNECTING COMPLEXITIES AND INTERRELATIONSHIPS•

The sections (*ruku*) and signs (*ayat*) in the Quran contain a depth of complexities and interrelationships as here between ourself and God. They require you to think beneath the surface of what the section or sign is saying. The classroom experience exploring the Quranic message depends on the quality of your commitment to develop your ability to discern the depth of what you are studying.

CHAPTER 112: SINCERE EXPRESSION SIGNS 112:1-112:4

Makkah: *Say: He is God, One,* (112: 1)

God, the Everlasting Refuge. (112:2)

He procreated not nor was He procreated (112:3)

and there be not anything comparable with Him. (112:4)

COMMENTARY^o

Say: He is God, One. (112:1) The Arabic term, *ahad*, used here to refer to God's Oneness is much more precise than the more frequently used term, *wahid*, which means One, *Ahad* has the added connotations of absolute and continuous unity and an absence of equals.

God, the Everlasting Refuge. (112:2) God's Oneness is such that there is no reality and no true and permanent existence except His. Moreover, every other being acquires whatever power it may possess from God who rules over this world. Nothing else whatsoever plans anything for the world nor, for that matter, decides anything in it.

The *Everlasting Refuge* also means the Lord to whom all creation turns for help, and without whose permission nothing is decided. God is the One and only Lord. He is the One God and Master while all other beings are but His servants. To Him and Him alone are addressed all prayers and supplications. He and only He decides everything independently. No one shares His authority.

He procreated not nor was He procreated. (112:3-112:4) This means that the reality of God is deep-rooted, permanent and everlasting. No changeable circumstances ever affect it. Its quality is absolute perfection at all times. Birth is descent and multiplication and implies a developed being after incompleteness or nothingness. It requires espousal which is based on similarity of being and structure. All this is utterly impossible in God's case.

And there be not anything comparable with Him (112:4) means that no one resembles Him in anything or is equivalent to Him in any respect, either in their reality of being, in the fact that He is the only effective

power, or in any of His qualities or attributes. This is implied in the statement of his being One made in the first sign, but it is repeated so as to contain and elaborate upon that fact.

The idolaters asked the Messenger of God: What is the lineage of your Lord? So God revealed what is to become Chapter 112. This short chapter is equivalent to one-third of the Quran, as authentic ahadith confirm. A man heard another man reciting this chapter repeatedly. He went to the Messenger the following morning and told him disapprovingly about what he had heard, as though he felt that it was too little. The Messenger commented: I swear by Him who holds my soul in His hand that it [i.e. this chapter] is equivalent to one third of the Quran.

And, indeed, there is nothing surprising in that. For God's Oneness which the Messenger was ordered to declare to the whole world is a belief to be ingrained in our minds, an explanation of human existence and a way of life in itself. From this standpoint, the chapter can be said to have embraced, in the clearest of terms, the principal and most fundamental ideas of the great truth of the Quranic message.⁷³

SUMMARY OF QURANIC SIGNS 112:1-112:4

WHO IS GOD?

Now the revelation clearly and precisely states who God is: The One, God, the Everlasting Refuge. He is not brought forth as the result of any procreation nor does he bring forth offspring. While previous signs had made reference to God (Allah) with whom the Makkans were familiar and some of His qualities He creates, shapes forms, guides and so forth, no where had it been made clear to them who God was until these signs were revealed for the first time to them.

STUDENTS SUMMARIZE A SIGN

Choose a particular sign (*ayah*) and rewrite it in your own words and analyze it.

QUESTIONS TO ASK STUDENTS

Why does the text tell you about interrelationships among the hypocrites and among the believers?

Why does the Quranic message think this interrelationship is worth knowing?

What factors make the interrelationship among hypocrites a difficult problem in terms of being part of a community?

What are some of the complexities of this question? Is this question simple or complex?

Is it easy or difficult to answer well and truly? What makes this a complex question?

How are we dealing with the complexities inherent in the question?

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

How would you rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I thought about the depth of interrelationships between myself and God
as expressed in these signs.

I was able to explain the main points of the signs to another student.